DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 114 SP 022 502

TITLE Swap Shop: Original Teaching Ideas Submitted by Readers of "Learning" Magazine.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 24p.; A compilation of columns from Eight Issues, August to November 1982 and January to April/May 1983.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT Learning; v11 n1-4,6-9 1982-1983

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Art Activities; Class Activities; Dramatics; Elementary Education; Elementary School Mathematics; Hobbies; *Learning Activities; Oral Language; Self Esteem; *Teacher Developed Materials; *Teaching Methods; Vocabulary Development; Writing Exercises
IDENTIFIERS PF Project

ABSTRACT

This collection of classroom ideas for the elementary school teacher contains learning activities, teaching methods, and suggestions on a wide variety of topics. The 22 teacher-submitted articles include ideas on writing, art, getting acquainted, vocabulary, self-esteem, open house, Halloween, mathematics, drama, hobbies, Valentine's Day, oral language, and summer projects. (DC)

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SWAP SHOP: ORIGINAL TEACHING IDEAS SUBMITTED BY READERS OF "LEARNING" MAGAZINE.

A COMPILATION OF COLUMNS FROM EIGHT ISSUES, AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 1982 AND JANUARY TO APRIL/MAY 1983

Compiled by

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education

Washington, DC

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Swap Shop

Writers' Conference

Tap local talent to stimulate writing

If your best efforts to generate enthusiasm for writing have brought about a subdued response, consider holding a special event that gives greater status and excitement to writing: a writers' conference. Start researching your community this summer to discover resource people connected with writing—librarians, storytellers, authors, newspaper reporters, editors, illustrators. Find out if some of these specialists would be willing to share their expertise in an informal workshop setting.

The conference, beginning after school and closing after a potluck dinner (a parent group could take on this responsibility), might consist of two hour-long sessions with a choice of workshops for each hour. The workshops—open to students of all ages as well as to parents—could focus on storytelling activities, on poetry or newspaper writing, or on specific writing techniques. It's important that hands-on participation, rather than lectures or demonstrations, be the order of the day—a policy to emphasize when making arrangements with presenters.

You may want to plan for an inspiring event, such as a musical act or a poetry reading, to kick off the program, and perhaps for a post-dinner wrap-up session.

Prepare a writers' conference invitation/program offering brief descriptions of classes, introducing the presenters, outlining the schedule and providing a registration blank. (You might also include a sign-up form for dinner contributions.) Make enough copies for both school and home distribution.

The writers' conference can boost the image of writing, providing many stimulating experiences along with practical tips that participants can apply to their own work. It's also a fine opportunity to provide a positive link between home and school.

Idea by: Joan Stommen, Doyon School, Ipswich, Mass. ■

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Art by Chad Kubo

CLIP OUT AND SAVE

Swap Shop

Create beauty from burlap through cooperative class crafting

Having kids work together to create an oversized art piece crafted in crewel can strengthen the group-cooperation aspect of your first-of-the-year plans. (If crewel isn't one of your skills, it might be something to look into this summer.)

For this venture into the crewel world you'll need a couple of yards of brightly colored burlap, scrap lumber for building a stretching frame (a good vacation-time project), a staple gun for attaching the burlap to the frame, crewel needles, and a sizable quantity of odd yarn bits. (The kids can help supply these later on.)

The class may choose to stitch a seasonal picture, or to illustrate a proverb or poem (original or old favorite). They'll be able to work on the project independently after an introduction to a few basics—the satin stitch, an outlining stitch and the backstitch, for example. The open-weave fabric accommodates big, bold stitching—the better for novices to get the needle in.

Set up the mural project in a convenient location and have stitchers sign up to work in groups of four or five at a time. As the design begins to come alive, the work slots should fill up fast. And before long, the finished art piece will be ready for display where others can enjoy it (and compliment the kids on their collective dexterity).

Don't be surprised if the success of the class mural project prompts individuals to create their own crewel craft pieces for gifts or to commemorate special events.

With a little summer preparation, you may be keeping the class in stitches all year long.

Idea by: Kathleen Emmons, Linntown Elementary School, Lewisburg, Pa. ■

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CLIP OUT AND SAVE

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Art by Chad Kubo

Swap Shop

SPECIAL FRIENDS

A one-to-one approach for getting acquainted

The strangeness of a new room, a new teacher and, very likely, new classmates doesn't change into easy familiarity overnight. And for the less assertive child, getting acquainted can be particularly trying. To help students learn about and feel more comfortable with their new classmates, try this project during the first few weeks of the school year. (The fact that writing and drawing skills are exercised in the process is an extra bonus.)

Provide each child with a folder labeled "My Special Friend." Then prepare a name-draw box and every morning have each child draw out a classmate's name. The person whose name is drawn becomes that child's "special friend" for the day. (Logistics note: there's a reciprocal aspect to any name-drawing project; each child will be both the giver and receiver of special attention and may need help in managing both roles.)

Outline for children the two basic activities for the project:

1. Write one or two questions to ask the person whose name you've drawn. (You may want to suggest areas of questioning; e.g., summer activities, favorite things, funny experiences.) Ask your questions at snack time, write down your special friend's answers, and file them in your folder.

2. Draw a picture for your special friend. (The drawing might depict one of the favorite things or funny experiences revealed in the question-and-answer interchange.) Write your name at the bottom of the picture. On the back of the picture, write something you like about your special friend.

Set aside a time for children to deliver their drawings. At this time, the children may also want to share with the class the information they learned in their interviews, along with comments, discussion and acknowledgement of similar interests—as time allows.

As the project continues, each class member emerges as a more complete individual, and the classroom should become more comfortable and familiar for all.

Idea by: Donna Anderson, Spencerport, N.Y. ▪

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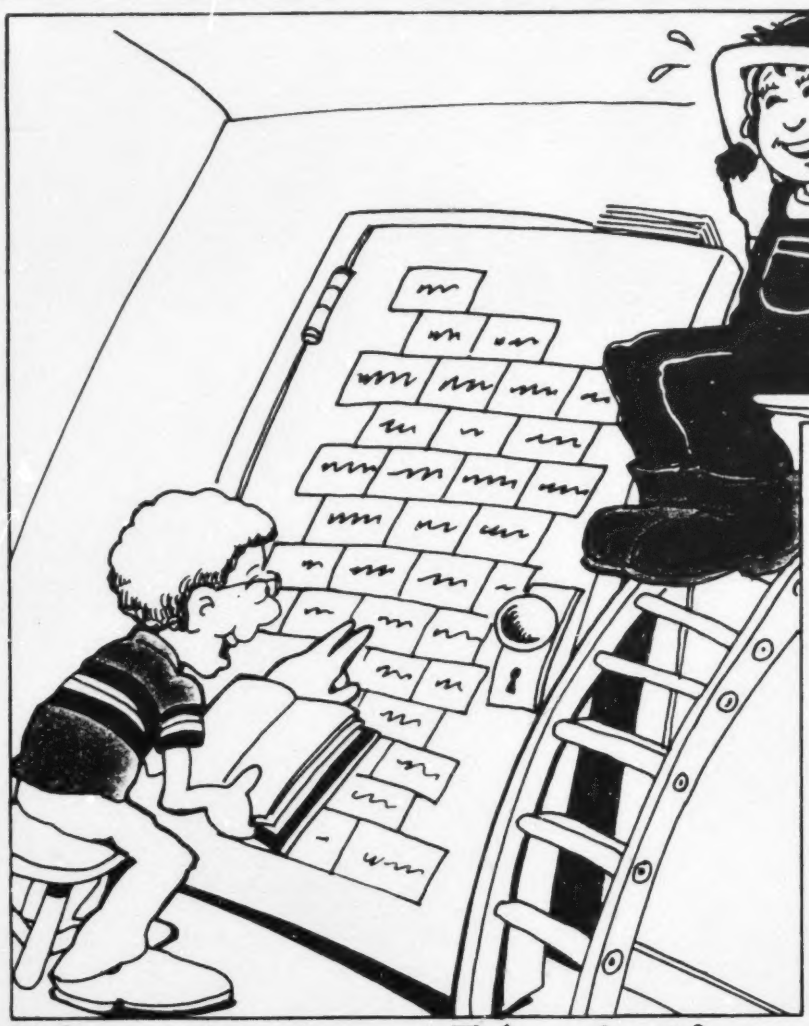

Vocabulary Varieties

Ways to help students remember the words

As is frequently the case with old saws, "Use a word ten times and it's yours" has a measure of merit. But providing the quota of diverse and diverting ways to use vocabulary-list words can be a strain on creativity. These suggestions may help.

• **Vocabu-wall.** Use the space above the chalkboard or bulletin boards for a "Vocabu-wall," a cumulative vocabulary list. (Or make a vocabu-door or vocabu-post.) When a student has found a new word and fully investigated its meaning and usage, the word can be copied onto a construction paper "brick" for the word wall and introduced to the class by its sponsor.

Once the vocabu-wall is complete, it becomes the focus of a variety of spare-minute, teacher-directed learnings:

Tell about situations in which people might be *desperate*. What are ways that people show *desperation*?

Summon a classmate with your hand or your head.

Stand with arms *akimbo*.

Pantomime *disgust, enthusiasm, suspicion, pandemonium.*

The wall may also be used for word hunts, following a Twenty Questions format. A student chooses a word, and others try to guess it by posing such questions as: Does the word have a suffix? Is it a compound word? Does it have fewer than four syllables? Does the word mean . . . ?

With a vocabu-wall it's easy to achieve a ten-times tally for a new word.

Idea by: Lola Mapes, Des Moines, Iowa.

• **Creative Cartoons.** Each student chooses a vocabulary-list word and draws an original caroon that conveys the meaning of the word without using the word. The child then captions the drawing with the word the cartoon describes.

• **Symbiotic Synonyms.** A student writes a vocabulary word in large letters across the center of a piece of paper. Then, using a dictionary or thesaurus, she looks for synonyms to attach to the word crossword-puzzle fashion.

Ideas by: Donna H. Gibson, Germantown, Tenn. ■

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Art by Chad Kubo

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CERTIFIED SUCCESS

Two techniques for acknowledging accomplishments

Although we hope that students enjoy the intrinsic rewards of personal achievement, offering a few extrinsic awards along the way can help polish self-images.

• **Record-keeping Record.** Let the "top 30" in your class cut hit albums to impress their public and to serve as personal reminders of performing expertise. Make a duplicator master of a facsimile phonograph record—concentric circles defining five or six "bands" surrounding a center label. Separate the disk into wedges and designate each section with a subject area (or provide a separate "record" for each subject).

Supply each student with a record. The student marks the band separators with black, cuts out the record and puts his or her name on the label as "performing artist." Records are then stored or posted where they are easily accessible for recording sessions. Whenever a student acquires a specific skill or achieves a particular level of mastery in one of the areas named on the record, he or she may note the event on one of the bands. (Primary grade recording artists may need technical assistance.) When the record is filled with skills, the student supplies a title and designs an album cover. The performer then goes on to higher levels of success with platinum and gold records of solid hits.

Idea by: Kozette Van Naita, Orlando, Fla.

• **"Show-off" Letters.** Like a general heavy with medals (or a travel van ablaze with stickers boasting sightseeing conquests), a student's display of triumphs and accomplishments can be impressive and colorful. Provide large pieces of oaktag or sturdy paper from which students may cut their first initials. The letters should be tall and fat, providing the maximum surface space.

Find a fairly permanent place to post the letters (each identified with the student's name) for the upcoming school year. The letters are to serve as personal bulletin boards for recording individual achievements and participation in school activities.

Simple symbols can say it all. For example, a musical note could indicate participation in chorus; a palette, art club; an SC design, student council. For some items—particularly the meeting of individual goals—students may make up their own symbols. And, of course, if stars or other emblems of outstanding achievement or honorable service are collected, these too can be placed on the student's award letter.

The empty initials of September will be filled to the edges as June approaches. And as each achievement is made public with the appropriate symbol, it can be further recognized with the congratulations of letter-watching peers and parents.

Idea by: Fran Castiello, Bradley School, Derby, Conn. ▪

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Art by Chad Kubic

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Taped Classroom Tours

Put your room "on record" for open house

Your classroom, readied for open house visitors, may in no way resemble a trade fair display or a touring art extravaganza. But you can borrow a technique used at many such exhibits to provide visitors with on-the-spot information and guidance: the taped tour.

With your students, list points of interest in your room—centers, displays, special equipment or materials. Then invite each student to select one "stop" and prepare a short summary about it for taping. Summaries will need to be reviewed—perhaps shortened, probably revised and rewritten—in order to achieve a coordinated program. And, of course, students will need to practice reading their summaries aloud before taping.

Plan to have each recorded description preceded by an introduction of the speaker. You might also consider numbering the various sites and having students announce the appropriate numbers on the tape for the convenience of listening visitors.

Here's an example of one possible site description:

This is Janis Benson at Site No. 6. Look at the space above the chalkboard. That's our "vocabu-wall." The words you see are the ones we found in our independent reading. Sometimes we play games with these words to expand our vocabulary.

You can end the taped tour with a short speech thanking guests for coming, and perhaps asking them to sign a guest register.

If students prepare two or three identical tapes, you'll be able to accommodate more visitors.

When the open house doings are over, you might save a tape to replay next fall to review the projects that were under way at open house time—and to recall the special young people who taped the tour.

Idea by: Lola R. Mapes, Des Moines, Iowa. ■

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Art by Dennis Ziemienski

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THE TWELVE DAYS OF HALLOWEEN

Ghoulish gifts for the spook season

As the 12 days of Christmas moved someone's true love to present a lavish array of amazing (and decidedly bizarre) gifts, the spirit(s) of Halloween may inspire your class to come up with an equally wondrous (and seasonably scary) collection of offbeat offerings for a hilarious parody of the traditional Christmas song.

First, challenge students to brainstorm as many Halloween symbols as they can—from bats and cats to tricks and witches. (The more items they list, the more "gift ideas" they'll have to choose from.) Next, have students draw from their lists to compose song lyrics in the style of "The Twelve Days of Christmas."

Following the pattern of the original song, students might first offer a screech owl in a dead tree. Moving along, the Halloween gift givers might present 2 witches' brooms, 3 black cats, 4 skeletons and 5 flying bats. Gifts 6 through 12 in the original song are animated (a-laying, a-swimming, a-dancing, etc.). Following suit, the Halloween collection could come through a-haunting, a-flapping, a-brewing.

The new song lyrics should provide an abundance of colorful images for illustrators to capture. Students who enjoy a math challenge may wish to compute the grand total of gifts. And class clowns will appreciate a chance to perform the songs, releasing a cacophony of seasonal sound effects and Halloween high spirits.

Idea by: Suzy Zeiser, Cincinnati, Ohio. ▪

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Art by Chad Kubo

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POSITIVE/ NEGATIVE NAME DESIGNS

Taking a look at children in black and white

Your students (who may think they are quite familiar with the names they've carried around all their lives) can take a new look at themselves by giving their monikers a positive/negative art treatment, proving once again that art and imagination can provide fresh perspectives.

To prepare for the project, cut white paper and dark-color construction paper into 2-inch squares. You'll need as many dark squares as there are letters in the first names of all the students. Cut half as many white squares as dark; then cut each white square in half to form two rectangles.

Give each student one white rectangle and one dark square for each letter in his or her first name. Then have the children follow this procedure:

Step one: Draw a fat block letter on each white rectangle. Placement is important; each letter must abut the right-hand edge of the paper. (Some artistic liberties will need to be taken with letters such as *K*, *W* and *X* to be sure substantial contact is made.)

Step two: Cut out the letters. Use a continuous cutting line so that the hole left in the white paper is a perfect letter shape too. Save centers of closed letters such as *A*, *B*, *D*, *O*.

Step three: To prepare one positive/negative letter block, glue a white rectangle—with its letter-shaped hole—over the left side of a dark square, matching edges on the left side. The hole will expose a dark-colored letter. (Replace the cutout centers of *A*'s, *B*'s, and other closed letters.)

Step four: Flip over the white cutout letter so that it appears backward, and glue it onto the right-hand portion of the dark square, facing and making contact with its dark-colored mirror image on the left side.

Student names formed by sets of positive/negative letter blocks can be arranged on a "Here's Looking At Us" bulletin board or can be used for making name cards. Either way the effect is quite unusual and decidedly positive.

Idea by: Sandra J. Frey, Lancaster, Pa. ■

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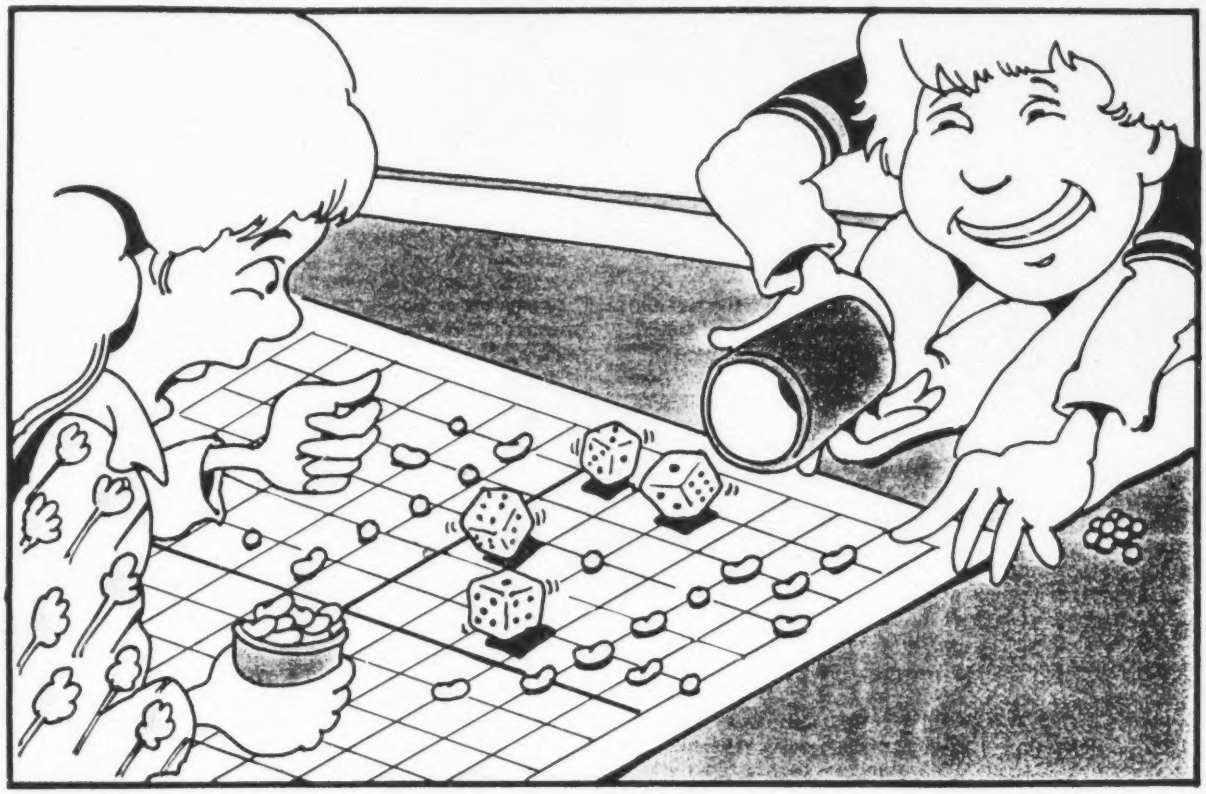

PLOT FOUR

Make points with a positive/negative numbers game

With a little non-devious plotting, you can create a board game that may help students cope with positive and negative numbers as well as with their own plotting of graph coordinates.

The basic ingredient of Plot Four is a gameboard—a 12-by-12 grid divided into quadrants by vertical and horizontal axes. Mark the intersection of the axes with a zero, and number the other axis/grid-line intersections from 1 to 6—positive numbers above and to the right of the zero; negative numbers below and to the left of the zero. When the board is complete, laminate it for durability.

Other game equipment includes two sets of dice in two different colors (one set for positive numbers and one for negative numbers) and markers for each of two players (two different kinds of dried beans work well). You may also want to provide a dice cup, which you can make yourself by covering a small juice can with felt.

To begin play, both players roll one positive die and one negative die. Each set of numbers is added together, and the player whose total is closer to zero starts. The starting player then rolls the two sets of dice, chooses *any* two of the four numbers to plot, and places a marker at the appropriate coordinate point on the board. (Players may pick which die comes first in the coordinate pair.) The second player follows the same procedure. The goal is to "take" four points in a row in any direction.

As the board fills with markers, a player may be unable to work out a combination of numbers that correlates to an open intersection. When that happens, the turn is lost. If a stalemate is reached before either player has achieved four in a row, the player with the greater number of markers on the board wins.

You may wish to introduce the game by having the players operate in the positive quadrant only, using just one set of dice and aiming for only three points in a row. Either way they play, students will get some positive point-plotting practice.

Idea by: Marianne Armstrong, Thomas Paine School, Urbana, Ill. ■

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CLIP OUT AND SAVE

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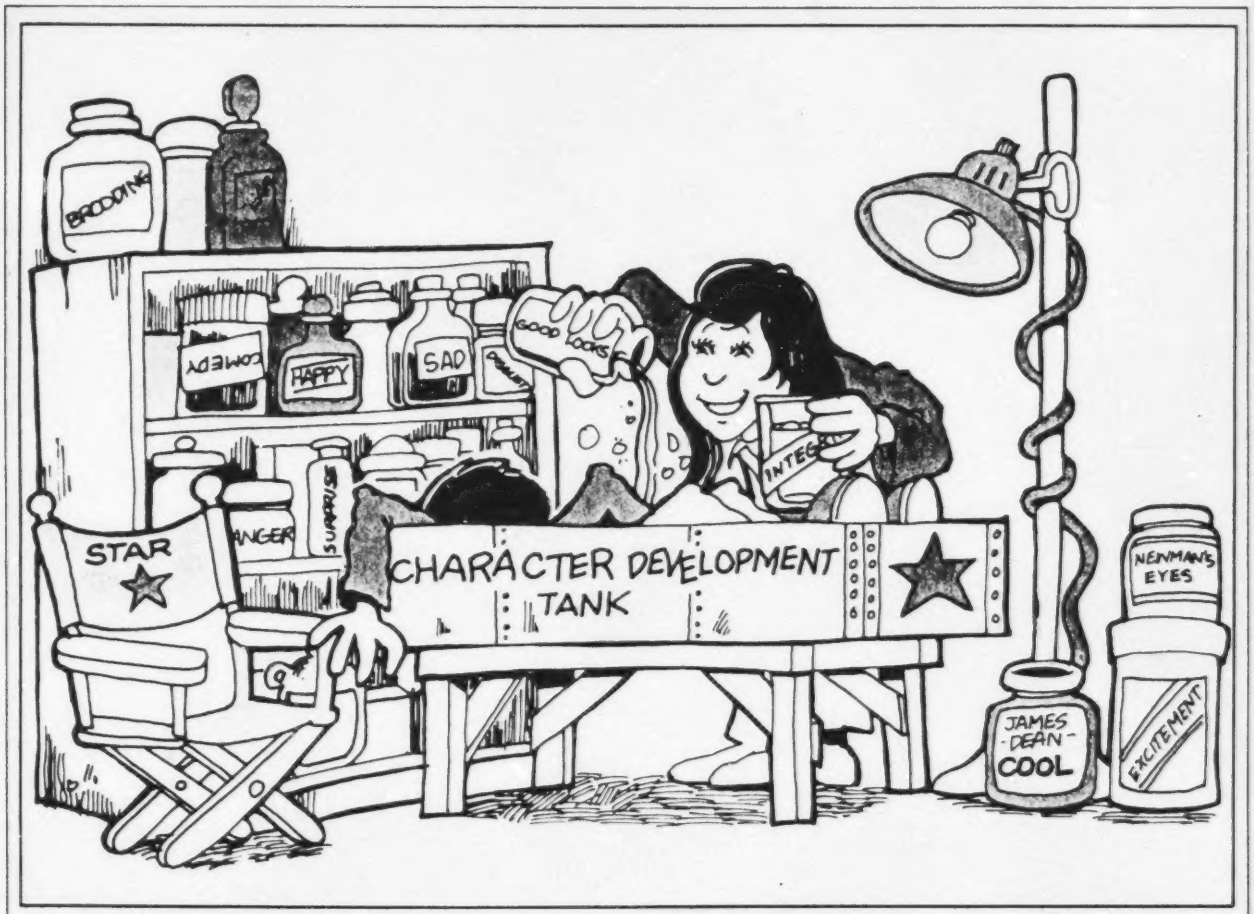

Composition Character

Character sketches open up play possibilities

Identifying character traits is just the beginning of a lively character development project that can end in a class play written and performed by the students. To get the project under way, ask each student to choose a memorable character—either from a book, a film or a TV series—and to list the character's distinctive attributes. The list might include the character's physical characteristics; ways of walking, talking, eating, sleeping; responses to particular situations; etc. Then have students develop their lists into detailed character sketches.

After they've developed character sketches of existing personalities, invite them to use the same approach to create original character profiles based on imaginary beings. Suggest that their lists of attributes include as many supporting details as possible, and that in developing the sketches, they describe their characters' probable behavior in the face of specified situations. (Such attention to specifics will help make the characters more vivid and real.)

The next step is showcasing the characters through the format of the play. Cooperative creativity will be challenged as students seek ways for the diverse, independently developed characters to interact. Expect a most implausible and comical plot. (With a large class, forming two or more small casts may make more sense than trying to fit all the characters into one play.)

Each student then has the opportunity to play his or her character—assuring faithful interpretation—before an audience. Following the presentation, read the original character sketches aloud to see if the audience can match each profile with its author/performer. The play's the thing for character building.

Idea by: Deborah Beaucaire, East Bridgewater, Mass. ■

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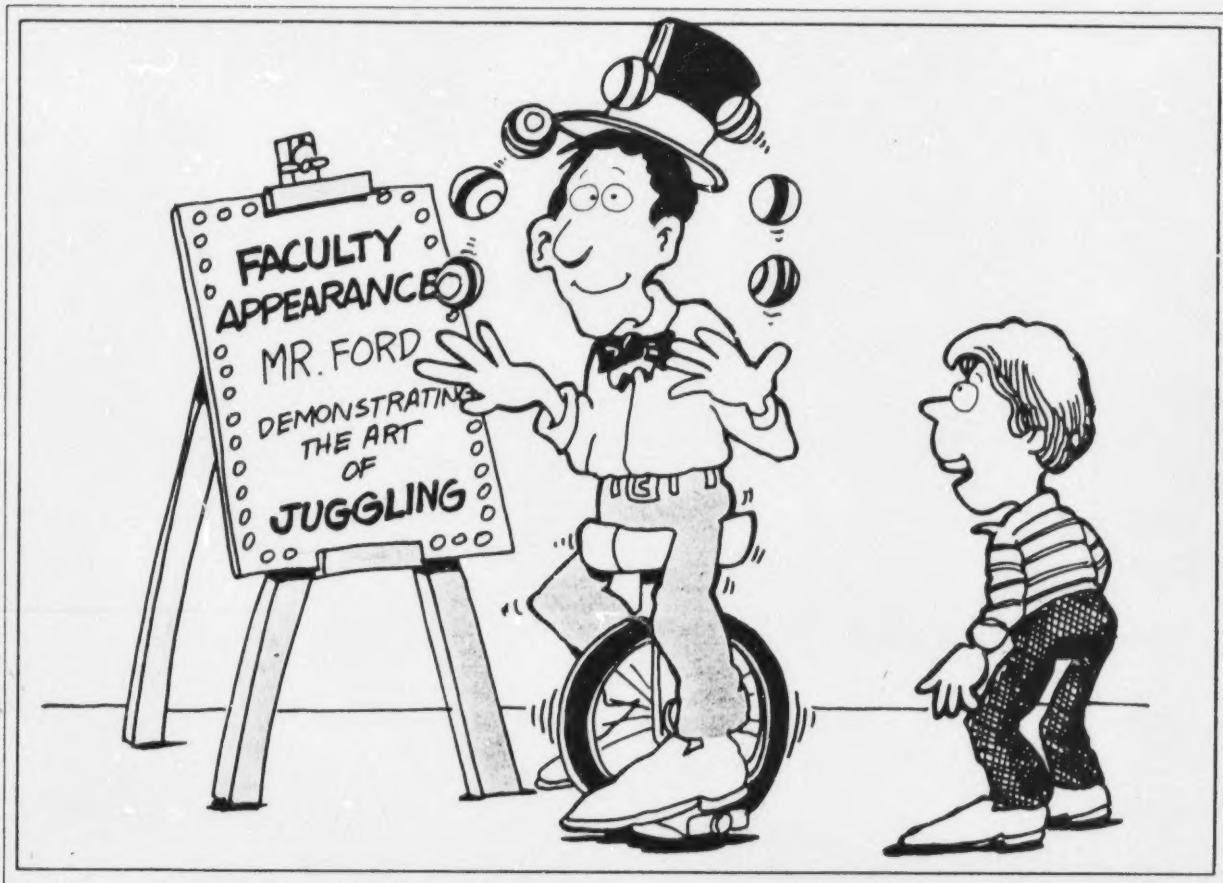

The Recreative Teacher

Focus on faculty hobbies

This fall, provide an opportunity for the children to discover some non-school facets of school people. Are there, for example, CBers or bikers or hikers among your ranks? Summer theater performers? Photographers? Fly fishers? Does someone on the staff write poetry or songs, coach swimming, raise gardenias, juggle?

This revealing research may have to be supplied by teachers, unless there is a class that could carry out the interview process as a language arts project. In either case, researchers should inquire into the availability of display items—photographs, samples of crafted materials, prize ribbons, souvenir programs—for a "Faculty Hobbies" exhibit.

If you like to do things in a big way, you might also schedule a number of "guest appearance" demonstrations at the exhibit site and distribute student-made flyers inviting everyone to "Meet our candle maker" or to "See our origami artist at work."

Some students may be surprised to find that they have interests in common with faculty members. Others may be motivated to try a craft or investigate a hobby that they see presented. Teachers, too, may be pleased to discover fellow hobbyists—a canoeing partner or a fourth for bridge, perhaps.

Hobby sharing is a way of "humanizing" the staff, while spreading the word on a variety of worthwhile leisure-time pursuits.

Idea by: Barbara Fleck-Paladino, New York, N.Y. ■

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Art by Chuck Kidd

Swap Shop

PARTS OF THE WHOLE

Colorful fraction "tiles" help clarify equivalencies

A set of fraction "tiles" that students can handle, compare and fit together is a valuable tool for developing an understanding of fractional parts. And it's easy for each student to make her own fraction kit for use anytime.

The basic ingredient is construction paper in five colors. Cut the paper into 4-inch squares. You'll need to provide one square in each color for each student, plus a few extra squares for follow-up experimentation.

When each student has a set of five squares, show one method of folding a square into sixteenths. (An overhead projector works well for such a demonstration.) The fractions might take shape in this way:

purple square = one whole

orange square = two halves (fold a square in half, open and cut in two pieces)

yellow square = four quarters (fold in half, then in half again, open and cut into four pieces)

blue square = eight eighths

red square = sixteen sixteenths

For this stage of fraction kit making, have all students use the colors in the same way in order to lessen confusion during class discussions.

Provide plastic sandwich bags for storage of individual fraction kits. The fraction pieces can then be manipulated and compared. Equivalencies and other relationships between pieces or groups of pieces can be established and recorded using color references:

2 yellows = 1 orange, therefore
2 fourths = 1 half
2/4 = 1/2

1 yellow is larger than 3 reds, therefore
1 fourth is larger than 3 sixteenths
1/4 > 3/16

Students may enjoy folding new squares in other ways to produce sixteenths. Equivalencies between these new fractions and the originals can be worked out on graph paper. Challenge students to mix the pieces to create "combination wholes," which can then be packaged in individual sandwich bags as puzzles to be solved, tangram style.

Idea by: Mary Jo Hanlon, All Saints School, Hayward, Calif. ■

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Art by Chad Kubo

Swap Shop

The Weekly Column

Kids become young Art Buchwalds and Abigail Van Burens

To give children an understanding of writing as a regular responsibility, with assignments that are individualized according to interests (and with the added motivation of a prominent byline), try having them write columns.

Provide students with daily newspapers, Sunday papers and magazines, and let them examine regular columns of information, advice, opinion and commentary. Students may be surprised by the quantity and diversity of columns; sports, health, child care, household repair, travel, entertainment, gardening, religion, education and pets may be among the range of subjects covered.

Analyze and discuss column content and style: How do columns differ from news? How do columns in the same field vary? How do some columns reflect the personality of the columnist?

Establish several groups, each of which will be creating a column. Each group can be formed around a common interest that will be the basis of the column.

Groups will probably need guidance in setting up procedures for producing a column on a weekly schedule. You might suggest they hold a brainstorming session early in the week to decide on a column topic. Members can then start researching material for the column. The actual writing (and the byline) might circulate among the group members, with those not doing the writing serving as editors. One member will be charged with turning in the column to meet an established weekly deadline.

Columns can be typed and duplicated for distribution if personnel and finances permit, or they can be displayed regularly on a bulletin board. Each group may want to create a logo design for its column.

The responsibility for turning out a column in one subject area on a regular basis should be continued long enough for groups to establish a productive work pattern—and perhaps even experience a bit of idea burnout—before requests for a change of column are considered. To help avoid the what-to-put-in-this-week scramble, you might provide boxes for donations of clippings and jotted-down ideas from "loyal readers."

Idea by: Florence Rives, Selma, Ala. ■

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CLIP OUT AND SAVE

Art by Chad Kubo

Swap Shop

BITE THE BAIT

Sampling lures sharpens senses

If kids think a fish is foolish to mistake a lure of feathery fluff for food, they may find this bait-testing activity eye opening.

Make a collection of food substances that includes sets of items that are somewhat similar in appearance—for example, potato, radish, pear, apple, cucumber. Attach the food samples to strings. (Have enough samples for each student to complete a full taste test of a set of similar baits.) Number the strings to help you and your students keep track of which tidbit is which.

Suspend baited strings in fishline fashion within reach of nibblers. Prepare a chart on which students may register their speculations about the identities of the various baits.

Invite prospective "fish" to examine the lures—with eyes only at first—and record their guesses. Next, allow the fish to move closer to the lines and take scent samples. Are there lures that still remain mysteries?

Tasting is the final test. Assure students that all samples are edible—though some are usually encountered in a cooked state. After testing, the lure examiners make final tries at identification and also vote for the bait they'd most like to bite.

Now verify the identity of each food sample. Which baits were easy to guess? Which required testing by sight, scent and taste to be identified? Did any defy identification?

Invite students to supply descriptive vocabulary for the various tastes—and be prepared to help spell a few strange sounds as these fish-that-got-away tell about their experiences.

Idea by: Holly C. Van Scoy and Joan Porter Smith, Austin, Tex. ■

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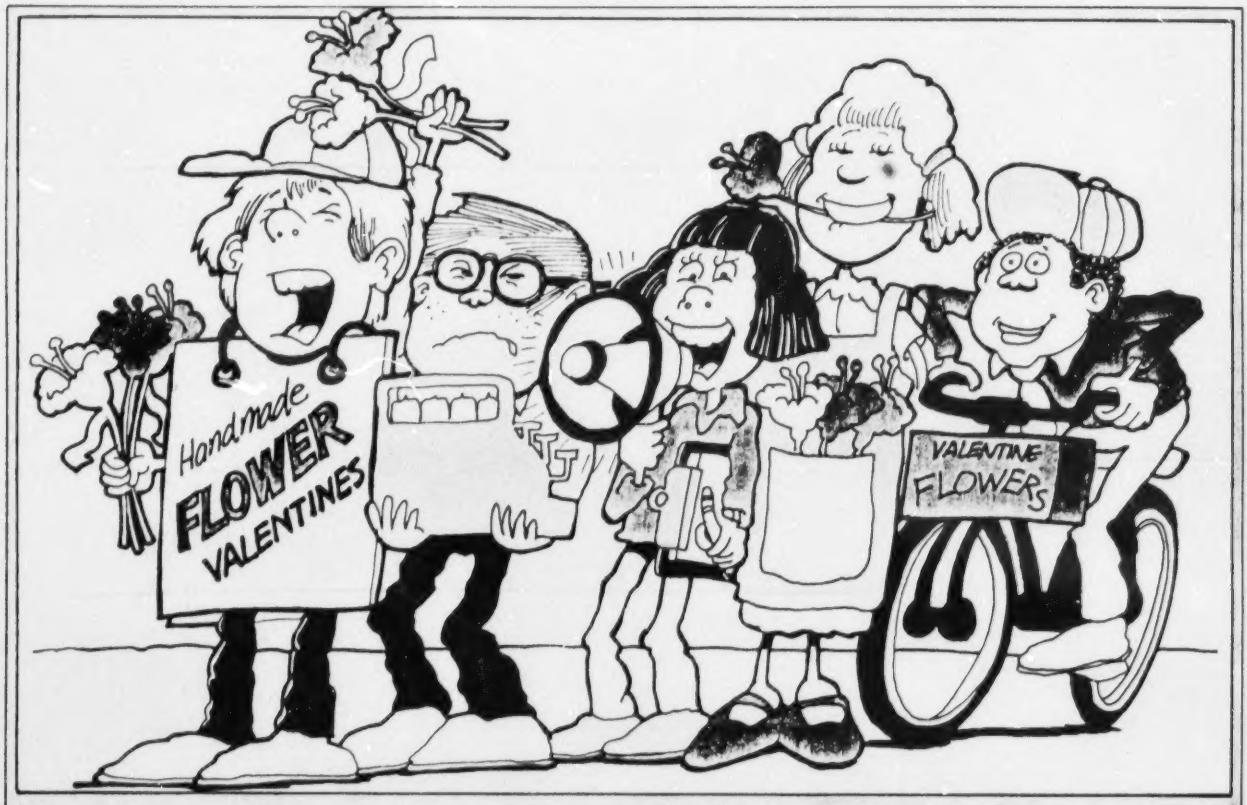

A FLOWERY MESSAGE

Valentine project raises spirits and revenue

The beginning of February may be too early to start thinking about flowers, but it's not too soon to begin preparing for a special Valentine's Day project that calls on a range of skills, among them artistic, writing, promotional and record keeping. The idea is to have students produce and sell (to the student body, faculty and staff) floral Valentine greetings, the proceeds of which will go to a to-be-determined event or cause (perhaps some worthy local charity).

The project is a five-phase affair that involves flower making, message writing, promotional campaigning, accounting and gift delivery. Flower makers will require some basic materials: colored tissue paper (red to mean "I love you," white to denote friendship and yellow to signify appreciation or thanks), green pipe cleaners (for the stems) and these directions: Cut tissue paper into 3½-inch squares. Stack four layers for each flower. Fold the paper accordion style, then fasten in the middle with a pipe cleaner. Separate the tissue-paper layers by pulling each up tightly against the pipe cleaner.

While the flower makers are busy with their flowers, the creative writing staff should be brainstorming varied valentine messages (each 10 words or less) to be written on strips of paper and attached to the flowers. Meanwhile, the promotional crew should be working on spreading the word—via posters or intercom—that valentine flowers will be available for gift giving, and that orders should be placed promptly.

It's up to the accounting team to determine cost per flower (maybe 25 cents for flower only, 35 cents for flower with message), as well as to keep detailed records of expenses and sales. The delivery crew will be responsible for seeing that orders reach the proper recipients.

Beyond developing skills, teamwork and revenue, the project can also provide a welcome midwinter lift to flower makers, givers and receivers alike.

Idea by: Nancy M. Barnes, Greenville Junior High School, Greenville, W.Va. ■

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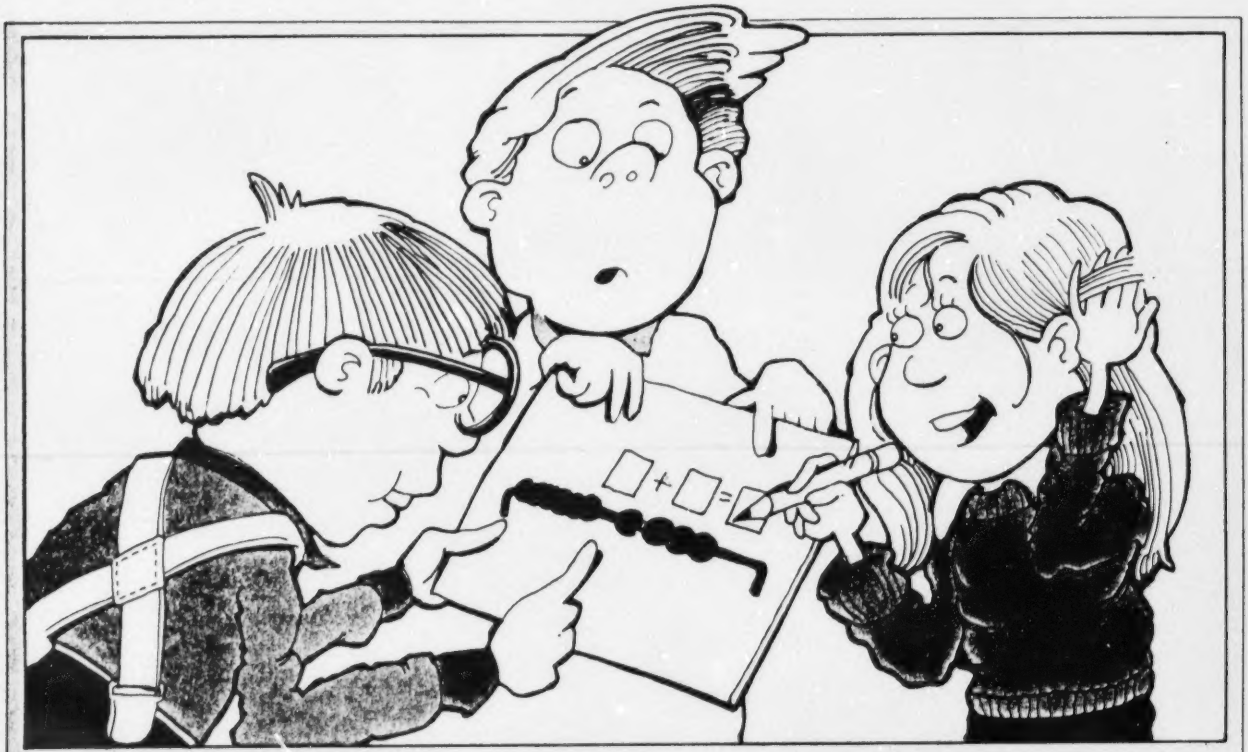

CLIP OUT AND SAVE

BEAD BOARDS

Math manipulatives that line up

You can make an abacuslike math aid to help youngsters learn basic addition and subtraction facts. To make each "bead board," you'll need the following materials: a 5-by-8-inch piece of heavy posterboard; a pipe cleaner; ten plastic or wooden counter beads with holes large enough to fit over the pipe cleaners; Con-Tact paper; markers and crayons.

Position the posterboard horizontally. On the upper portion of the board, and slightly to the right of center, draw three boxes spaced equally apart. Between the first two boxes, write the addition sign (or the subtraction sign); between the second and third boxes, write the equals sign. Now cover the board with Con-Tact paper so that numbers written in the boxes can be easily erased.

On the lower left portion of the board, pierce a small hole, insert one end of the pipe cleaner, and bend it down at the back of the board to keep it in place. Slip the ten beads onto the pipe cleaner, insert the other end into the right side of the board, and secure it in the same way as the left side. Push all the beads to the far left of the pipe cleaner. (If you wish, mount the board onto a piece of plywood for extra durability.)

To give a child addition practice, write in crayon two addends (whose sum is 10 or less) in the first two boxes on the board. Give the student the bead board and the crayon, and ask him to complete the equation by first moving the appropriate number of beads into position below each addend, and then counting to determine the answer to write—in crayon—in the blank answer box. (Unused beads remain at the far left; a tag fastener, the kind used to close bread bags, may be put into position as a barrier.)

To perform subtraction operations, the procedure is slightly different. The child first counts and moves into position the number of beads indicated in the first box (the minuend). From those beads, the child moves into position the number of beads indicated in the second box (the subtrahend). The answer to be written in the blank answer box is the number of beads remaining beneath the first box.

After you've erased and replaced box numbers several times, you might let the student choose the numbers to be manipulated for hands-on learning of basic math facts.

Idea by: Terese Metz, Murphysboro, Ill. ■

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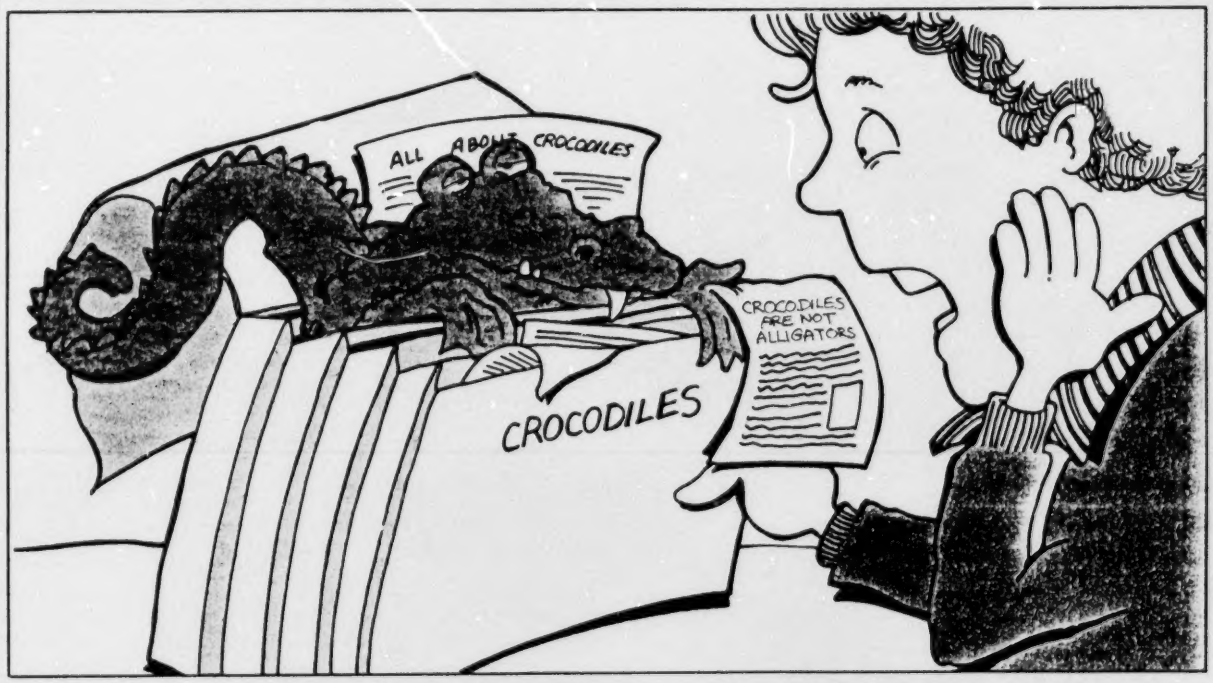

CREATE-A-KIT

An activity-packed alternative to the research report

Young researchers will be relieved to learn that the writing of long reports need not be the inevitable aftermath of every excursion into the resources-and-references jungle. For their next time out, have guidelines ready for "create-a-kits."

The first step is the same as for any research project: to choose a topic —one that no one else in the class has chosen and one for which the library has adequate reference materials (students will need to check this out). From that point on, however, work moves in a different direction. The researcher extracts 20 firm facts about the topic (a class discussion about fact versus opinion may be useful), and from these facts develops a quiz and an answer key. Both the quiz and key are copied onto ditto masters to be duplicated for the kit.

Another kit item is a picture or diagram pertaining to the topic. These illustrations may be copied, traced, cut from magazines or rendered in various art forms—with accuracy of representation verified by reference materials. (Illustrations, like all kit items, should be planned to fit into a standard or accordian file folder.)

A word-search puzzle is the next item to be added to the kit. Each researcher creates a puzzle using 10 or 12 words related to his or her topic. Definitions of words that may be unfamiliar to classmates should be provided in a "for your information" footnote section. The puzzle is then copied onto a ditto master for duplication and inclusion in the kit.

The final kit item is a game based on concepts and vocabulary relating to the topic. Each kit maker designs his own gameboard (or card game or grid game) and draws up the rules for play. (Guidelines for writing clear, complete rules might be reviewed prior to game production.)

At last the kit materials are ready to be assembled and placed in a file folder—colorfully decorated to stimulate interest in the topic. The class collection of kits is then made available for student use, giving each kit maker a chance to investigate the finds of other researchers in the class.

The create-a-kit project offers students the chance to become expert resources on a topic. It's an alternative to traditional report writing that could motivate students to try more research on a create-a-kit basis.

Idea by: Lynn Elliott, Springview School, Flushing, Mich. ■

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Q&A Exchange

Ask a *why* question, get a *because* answer

An oral language exercise doesn't have to be dramatic or long-winded to be effective. It can be as simple as a series of quick question-and-answer exchanges between students, giving practice in formulating questions and developing appropriate answers. And for ideal question starters, you need look no farther than the reliable who-what-where-when-why-how format.

Prepare an activity board by lining up two rows of six pins or hooks on which tags can be placed. Prepare tags in six different colors—about eight tags in each color. On half the tags in each color set, mark a *Q*; on the rest, mark an *A*. Place each *Q* color set on a hook in the top row on the activity board. Put the corresponding *A* tags in the bottom row. Above the top row of tags, write the words *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how*. The board is now ready for activity—initiated by a questioner.

The questioner chooses a *Q* tag—for example, one from the green-tag stack under the *where* label. He also takes an *A* tag of the same color to give to an answerer when the time comes. The questioner then formulates a question (factual or nonsensical, but not requiring a factual answer) beginning with the word *where*; for example, "Where did the mean troll hide the gold he stole?"

The questioner picks an answerer and presents the *A* tag. The answerer then prepares a response that seems appropriate, such as, "He hid it in a hole under a rock in back of his house."

If questioner and answerer have both made acceptable statements, they keep their respective tags and a new question-and-answer team takes over. The activity continues until no tags remain on the board.

As a variation, have an answerer go first and pick someone to supply an appropriate question.

To add another dimension, and some humor, to the activity, supply each student with a *Q* or an *A* tag, and have each write down the kind of sentence indicated. Call on random pairs to read their creations.

Idea by: Jackie Miller, Brigham City, Utah. ■

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CHOCOLATE FUDGE CAKE
CHOCOLATE MOUSSE CAKE
I HAVE 12 EGGS. MY FAVORITE CAKE CALLS FOR 2 EGGS. HOW MANY CAKES CAN I MAKE? (__ CAKES.) HOW MANY EGGS WILL BE LEFT? (__ EGGS REMAINING.)
DREAM CAKE
COCONUT CAKE
ANGEL FOOD CAKE
EGG
EGG
CARROT CAKE

CONCRETE QUOTIENTS

Dividing eggs by cakes makes sense

For a meaningful introduction to a math concept, you can't beat the concrete—eggs, for example. Actually, you don't have to use real eggs. Blocks can serve as representations, especially since the cake-making activity they're used in won't produce real cake either.

The project begins with a discussion of best-loved cakes. Each child decides on a favorite and finds out —through cookbook research—how many eggs that cake calls for. All the cake lovers/bakers then receive a dozen blocks (eggs) and must figure out how many cakes they'll be able to make. Children can work this out by segregating cake-batch sets of eggs and then counting the sets. The extra eggs remaining should also be noted.

After all the eggs have been grouped, invite the bakers to report to the class the number of cakes possible and the number of eggs remaining. Data might be recorded on a chart and converted into arithmetical notation. (Warning: Some student may choose a cake that calls for 14 eggs, in which case, 0 cakes are possible. Or someone may pick a cake that requires no eggs at all, so that an infinite number of cakes could be made and the student would still have her original dozen eggs. Division with zeros is most unusual.)

Have each baker cut a cake shape out of paper and on it write the word problem representing the egg-set situation:

"I have 12 eggs. My favorite cake calls for 2 eggs. How many cakes can I make? (__ cakes.) How many eggs will be left? (__ eggs remaining.)"

On the back of the cake shape goes the answer: 12 ÷ 2 = 6; 6 cakes. 0 eggs remaining.

Display the cake cutouts at a center where children can take one, figure out the problem and check the answer. Keep a carton of "eggs" handy for concrete confirmation.

Idea by: Joyce Tompkins, Andover Regional School, Newton, N.J. ■

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SHOE-SEUM

Footwear research keeps kids on their toes

If an archaeologist of the future were to unearth the shoes your students are wearing right now, what clues would the shoes provide about life in the 1980s? That's just one of the questions kids might consider as they focus on footwear.

Introduce shoe-seum activities with a shoe-off. One fine (dry) day, have the kids line up their paired shoes for all to examine and discuss. Talk about what the shoe collection reveals about the wearers. Then follow up with these activities:

—Using the collection as a starting point, make a list of shoe-related words, including kinds of shoes (tennis, saddle) and parts of shoes (tongue, heel), and research the origins of these words.

—Have a "Which pair of shoes am I?" guessing game. Each student writes a detailed description of a pair of shoes in the first person ("I'm dirty white with a hole on one tip"); the class tries to guess the correct pair (not always easy when half the collection is made up of worn white sneakers).

—Students locate or write poems about shoes.

—Perform shoe math. Conduct a survey of shoe sizes and determine the average shoe size. Measure and compare, in both inches and centimeters, the lengths of shoes. Have students figure out how many average-length shoes equal a mile.

—Do research into footwear fashion through the ages and around the world. Collect pictures (or the real thing, if possible) of shoes from other times and other places. How do they compare with the class collection? What do they reveal about differences in culture, geography, climate?

—Compile a list of materials used in making shoes. Find out where these materials come from.

—Collect pictures of and information about shoes worn in various professions: dance, nursing, athletics, space, etc. Try to acquire samples for your shoe-seum.

—Create shoe art: silhouettes, still-life compositions, magazine picture montages, shoe sculptures.

After students have discussed, described, collected, computed, researched and rendered, invite students from other classes to a *shoe*-and-tell exhibit.

Idea by: Vicky Middleswarth-Kohn, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Ky. ■

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SUMMER PROJECTS BOX

A way to generate—and file—summertime activities

What's more boring than a July afternoon with "nothing to do"? An August afternoon marred by the same deficiency. A summer projects box can help alleviate the problem, and also serve as a record of summertime activities.

Ask each student to procure a sturdy cardboard box. The box may be organized/divided using cardboard dividers, file folders or shoe boxes to keep projects separate.

Generating ideas for the contents of the box can be a cooperative effort. Divide the class into groups and suggest to each a general topic to explore for summer project ideas. For example:

FOOD

—Choose a recipe and make something from scratch. File a copy of the recipe in your box, with notes about how the recipe turned out.

—Set up a restaurant for a limited clientele. Make menus, serve your customers, present token bills.

SPORTS/GAMES

—Set up a file on your favorite sports star. Include photographs and articles from newspapers and magazines.

—Organize a Summer Olympics in your neighborhood. Time the running events, measure the broad jumps, design and create medals, etc.

—Set up a makeshift bowling alley in your backyard using milk cartons for pins and a large rubber ball.

GARDEN/NATURE

—Plant and care for a vegetable or flower garden. Keep records of plant growth.

—Make a study of insects. Keep a record of what they eat and how they live. Make sketches of them. Then get a book about insects from the library and try to identify them.

—Press wildflowers to use for art projects.

WOODS/LAKE/BEACH

—Plan a treasure hunt for a friend. Write out the clues leading to a hidden prize.

—Make sketches of various kinds of boats.

—Collect shells and devise your own classification system for them.

TRIPS/VACATIONS

—Conduct research to find places in your area that would make good family trips. Write a short description of each place and include, if possible, a photograph or drawing of the spot. Share your research findings with your family.

—Make a file of on-the-road (or in-the-air) games and activities.

—Collect maps, brochures and postcards from your travels, and file them in your box.

After each group has presented its ideas, call for additional contributions from the class. When all contributions have been noted, invite students to compile "Summer Project Ideas" booklets to take home along with their project boxes—as boredom beaters and memory keepers.

Idea by: Patricia Budde, Douglas, Mass. ■

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COLORFUL IDIOMS AND EGGS~PRESSIONS

Kids picture figurative language

Our everyday language is so rife with idioms that we pay little attention to them. Taking a close look at these common expressions from a literal viewpoint, however, can be an enlightening and engaging language activity.

• **A Spectrum of Sayings.** Colors are a rich source of idiomatic expressions. Challenge kids to collect as many color-connected sayings as possible. Contributions might include: "seeing red," "tickled pink," "yellow streak," "green with envy," "feeling blue," "in the black," "in the red," "in the pink," "golden years." Have students speculate on possible reasons for connecting specific colors with particular conditions.

Then call out the whimsy in your group by having each student choose a saying and illustrate its literal sense, making liberal use of the key color with crayons, paint, swatches of fabric or scraps of paper in a collage or mosaic design. Display these language/art pieces, creating a rainbow of colorful expressions.

Idea by: Rebecca Albeke, Corvallis, Ore.

• **What Does This Mean, Eggsactly?** As spring bulletin boards burst forth with blossoms, bunnies, birds and eggs, focus attention on the many egg-related expressions we use that don't mean exactly what they say. Post a few and encourage students to supply others: "egghead," "walking on eggs," "eggs them on," "a good egg."

Discuss the sayings. How have students heard them used? Are any of them unfamiliar? How do the figurative meanings of the expressions relate to the literal meanings?

Invite students to choose an "eggs-pression" and make a two-panel illustration contrasting the way the saying is generally used and the literal meaning of the words—enlivened, of course, by plenty of eggs (of both a literal and decorative sort).

Idea by: Sandra J. Frey, J.E. Fritz School, Lancaster, Pa. ■

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